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CORRUPTION NETS FORMER U.S. CONSULATE OFFICIAL FEDERAL PRISON TIME

(EL PASO, TEXAS) This morning, U.S. District Judge David Briones sentenced a former telecommunications officer for the U.S. Consulate in Ciudad Juarez to 21 months in federal prison for accepting bribes and gratuities.

In addition, Judge Briones ordered that 39-year-old El Paso resident **ARCELIA MARIA BETANCIS** pay a \$1,000 fine and be placed on supervised release for a period of two years after completing her prison term. Betancis was also ordered to complete 200 hours of community service after completing her prison term.

“Public corruption cannot be tolerated in Texas. Our border with Mexico needs to be safe, orderly, and free of corruption. This sentence sends a strong message that any official who violates the public trust will be caught and punished,” stated United States Attorney Johnny Sutton.

On April 14, 2002, a federal jury convicted Betancis on two counts of receiving bribes and two counts of receiving gratuities. The jury found that Betancis accepted bribes in connection with expediting visas for various Mexican businessmen. Evidence presented during trial showed that she issued referrals for 497 expedited visas charging between \$50 and \$2,500 per referral. During an 18-month period beginning in 1997, Betancis received over \$15,000 as a result of her scheme.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. State Department–Diplomatic Security Service. Assistant United States Attorney J. Brandy Gardes prosecuted this case on behalf of the Government.

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